

Starport

The Web sites for all Starport services are currently being overhauled, and by early next year employees will be able to access menu and nutrition information, as well as ordering food online. “We are excited to revamp our Web sites to better meet the overall communication needs of the JSC team,” Conder said.

The Gilruth Center is also included in the new Starport renovations – now known as “Starport Fitness at the Gilruth Center.” The facility is receiving a major overhaul that includes increased square footage, two new exercise rooms, larger men’s and women’s locker and shower facilities and an expanded weight room.

Other changes within the Starport program include the completed remodeling of both gift shops. The Starport Gift Shop has already had an extreme makeover. In December of 2002, the Bldg. 11 store went from a counter to a fully enclosed gift shop with a space theme. And, in December of 2003, the Bldg. 3 store expanded to twice its size and added a fun space theme.

“Starport is for you!” Conder said. “Starport is the place that you can rely on to help you achieve a little replenishment throughout your busy work schedules.”



I'm Starport Stan. You can find me at the Starport Cafés, catered events or hanging out at the vending machines.



The Starport Gift Shop offers greeting cards, photo processing, floral arrangements, stamps, discount tickets, business cards, balloon bouquets, UPS shipping and, of course, plenty of NASA merchandise.



I'm On-the-go Joe. You can find me at the Starport Gift Shop buying discount tickets, memorabilia, T-shirts or even flowers for my sweetie.



Above: Center employees can now enjoy a new look, along with the new services, at the Bldg. 3 Starport Café.



Left: This November, Starport brought in the new food service contractor, Sodexo, which offers high-quality dining options with something to suit everyone's taste. Their signature programs add healthier food choices and greater variety.

The first phase of a major renovation of the Gilruth is now under way and will give the facility increased square footage for a temporary weight room and larger men's and women's locker and shower facilities. The second phase will provide for the addition of two dedicated group exercise rooms and a completion of the final fitness center that will provide a greater variety of resistance, free weight and aerobics machines.



ABOUT THE CHARACTERS

Starport characters were created by one of JSC's very own artists, John Streeter, with the JIMMS contract. A “Name the Character Contest” was held during Safety and Total Health Day, where JSC employees voted for each of the character's names. Winners were:

Claire Cox Character name: *Starport Stan*
Mitchell Chisenberry Character name: *Stay C. Fit*
Angel Hadnott Character name: *On-the-go Joe*



I'm Stay C. Fit. You can find me exercising at Starport Fitness at the Gilruth, taking a group exercise class or playing team sports.

Explorer Schools

nurture the scientists of the future

by Julie Burt

Most of the 210 kindergarten through 12th-grade students attending Sasakwa Elementary and Sasakwa High School in Sasakwa, Okla., are bused in from nearby towns. Each morning sleepy students – the majority of them Native American – pass through the doors of the brick school building that houses both the elementary and the high school. But today they get a little something extra – a boost of energy in the form of a red, white and blue paper banner that reads “Sasakwa – the FIRST NASA Explorer School in Oklahoma!”

There are currently 100 NASA Explorer School teams in 46 states. Teams are made of teachers and administrators, and some teams consist of individuals from different schools within the same school district. The program grows by 50 teams each year. Open season for teams to apply for the 2005 selection ends Jan. 31.

Focusing on underserved populations, NASA implemented the Explorer School Program in 2003 to improve teaching and learning in middle school science, technology, engineering and math.

While partnered with NASA, teams in the program are eligible to receive up to \$17,500 over a three-year period to purchase technology tools that support science and mathematics instruction. Using unique NASA teaching resources, technology tools and experts, Explorer School teams will supplement their current lesson plans for grades four through nine.

“We congratulate you on being selected as one of the 2004 Explorer Schools and welcome you to the NASA family,” NASA Science Officer Mike Fincke said to students in a downlinked message from the International Space Station. “The journey begins with you. Efforts of students such as yourselves will lead our nation into the future.”

This fall, NASA representatives traveled to each of the 50 teams’ local schools to kick off the three-year partnership.



A large portion of the students at Sasakwa Public Schools are of Native American descent. Ken Chambers, Chief of the Seminole Nation, is seen here with students from his tribe, Deputy Center Director Bob Cabana and Astronaut Janet Kavandi.

Johnson Space Center’s Center leadership, astronauts and representatives from the education and public affairs offices flocked to cities from Waco, Texas, to Wahpeton, N.D., to give an official welcome to the newest members of the NASA team.

“I was bragging a little bit when I went to town to buy my khaki skirt,” Sasakwa High School senior Meagan Sanchez, who is of Native American and Hispanic descent, said. Sanchez was chosen to represent her school and introduce guest speaker Astronaut Janet Kavandi at Sasakwa’s kick-off event in October. “The sales lady asked why so many of us needed khaki skirts and pants. I explained to her that we were a NASA Explorer School and that visitors from NASA were coming to Sasakwa soon.”

The theme for the fall school visits was “There is a place for me at NASA.” JSC representatives told students that many different careers await them in the space program, from accountants to dieticians, climatologists to Web site designers, scientists to engineers.



Students and faculty from G.W. Carver Academy, West Ward Elementary School, Circle of Nations School, Jardine Diversified Leadership and Technology Magnet School and James Madison High School participate in NASA Explorer School program activities. NASA Explorer Schools have the unique opportunity to incorporate NASA teaching resources, technology tools and experts to supplement their regular lesson plans.

“It’s important that students realize that you don’t have to be an astronaut to work for NASA,” Ed Pritchard, JSC Explorer School Program Manager, said. “NASA will be counting on these students to help us reach our exploration goals as we prepare to go to the Moon, Mars and beyond.”

Besides being the first in the state of Oklahoma, Sasakwa’s Explorer School, made of the elementary school and the high school, has another distinguishing characteristic: it is the smallest NASA Explorer School, with 210 students. “Even smaller than the (Explorer) school in Alaska,” Sasakwa Explorer School Team Lead Kyle Wilson said, wearing a NASA lapel pin on his orange rain-soaked shirt. He had just finished an egg drop experiment with his seventh-grade students.

Wilson, who led Sasakwa’s effort to apply for the NASA Explorer School program, teaches seventh-grade math and eighth-grade

science, math, health and language arts. He also serves as the assistant principal. This past summer, Wilson and his three Explorer School team members traveled to Houston to get hands-on instruction in how to bring NASA to his students.

“We really liked visiting the Neutral Buoyancy Lab and Ellington Field,” Wilson said. His team has applied for the chance to fly an experiment on NASA’s C-9, the plane that can be flown to simulate the weightless environment of space. They await notification, as the selected teams are set to fly in April 2005.

Teachers and administrators around the country have the opportunity to form teams and apply for the NASA Explorer School program now through Jan. 31. The application is online at: <http://explorerschools.nasa.gov>